

# TWO



GAY COUPLES ON THEIR LOVE

# H E A R T S



# DESIRE



EDITED BY MICHAEL LASSELL & LAWRENCE SCHIMEL

BASTEI ENTERTAINMENT 

# Contents

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Cover  |  |
| About this book  |  |
| Title  |  |
| Copyright  |  |
| Double Visions: A note from the editors                                    |  |
| Matthew Rettenmund & José Vélez  |  |
| I ♥ José — by Matthew Rettenmund   |  |
| The Little Things You Do — by José Vélez                                   |  |
| Craig Lucas & Patrick Barnes   |  |
| Reality/Fantasy — by Craig Lucas   |  |
| Fantasy/Reality — by Patrick Barnes  |  |
| Arnie Kantrowitz & Lawrence Mass   |  |
| Why I Love Larry — by Arnie Kantrowitz                                     |  |
| Life With Arnie — by Lawrence Mass   |  |
| Reggie Cabico & Guillermo Castro   |  |
| It's not so much his kiss I recall as much as his voice — by Reggie Cabico |  |
| You & I Are Guests of Garcia Lorca — by Guillermo Castro                   |  |
| Edmund White & Michael Carroll   |  |
| Meeting Michael — by Edmund White  |  |
| Meeting Edmund — by Michael Carroll  |  |
| Mark Thompson & Malcolm Boyd   |  |
| Mash Note for Malcolm — by Mark Thompson                                   |  |
| Moments from a Gay Marriage (On Our Tenth Anniversary) — by Malcolm Boyd   |  |
| Richard Labonté & Asa Dean Liles   |  |
| My Housekeeper — by Richard Labonté  |  |
| Notes from the Housekeeper — by Asa Dean Liles                             |  |
| Tom Bianchi & Mark Prunty  |  |
| My Magnificent Other — by Tom Bianchi                                      |  |
| Happy 4th Anniversary — by Mark Prunty                                     |  |
| Douglas Sadownick & Tim Miller   |  |
| Leaving Tim — by Douglas Sadownick   |  |
| He/I/We — by Tim Miller  |  |
| Michael Bronski & Walta Borawski   |  |
| Trying to Write a Love Poem for Michael Bronski — by Walta Borawski        |  |
| Remembering Walta — by Michael Bronski                                     |  |
| Paul Monette & Winston Wilde   |  |
| Notes to Wake Up To — by Paul Monette and Winston Wilde                    |  |
| Christopher Isherwood & Don Bachardy                                       |  |
| From October — by Christopher Isherwood                                    |  |
| From Last Drawings of Christopher Isherwood — by Don Bachardy              |  |

Harlan Greene & Olin Jolley

On Valentine's Day — by Harlan Greene

Olin Replies — by Olin Jolley

About the contributors

About the editors

# About this book

A declaration of love — gay couples talk about their significant other.

Current and past liaisons, passion and daily routine, longtime relationships and the tingle of first dates — the day-to-day reality of love is manifold. This anthology also tells about a time of loss, when many men lost their partners — and how hope and the will to live prevail. But most of all, this eBook is about something timeless: Love.

TWO HEARTS DESIRE, the touching, erotic, and funny portrayal of gay love, was first published in 1997

Michael Lassell & Lawrence Schimel (ed.)

# TWO HEARTS DESIRE

Gay Couples on their Love

**BASTEI** ENTERTAINMENT 

# BASTEI ENTERTAINMENT

Digital reissue

Bastei Entertainment is an imprint of Bastei Lübbe AG

Copyright © 2017 by Bastei Lübbe AG, Schanzenstraße 6-20, 51063 Cologne, Germany

Anthology edited by Michael Lassell and Lawrence Schimel

© 1997 by Michael Lassell and Lawrence Schimel

All contributions copyright © by their authors

All rights reserved

Cover illustration: © Frank & Reed, Stuttgart unter Verwendung von drei Motiven von  
[iStock.com/svetikd](https://www.istock.com/ Svetikd)

Cover design: Frank & Reed, Stuttgart

E-book production: Urban [SatzKonzept](#), Düsseldorf

ISBN 978-3-7325-2725-0

[www.bastei-entertainment.com](http://www.bastei-entertainment.com)

# Double Visions: A note from the editors

For at least as long as recorded history — both pagan and Judeo-Christian — there have been same-sex couples. These partnerships have been called many things, from platonic friendships to sexual couplings, and yet the image of the gay man is of a solitary creature drifting through life without the anchor of family, often promiscuous, more frequently unhappy, only recently liberated in any sense of the word, but invariably outside.

Part of the reason has been the way we gay/homosexual/queer men have portrayed ourselves. Even when we write of love, it is from the viewpoint of the individual and “the other,” mimicking that sense of exclusion we feel when first discovering our attractions to other men. This is the literary tradition by which homosexuality has passed through the millennia, yet despite fierce persecution, we gay men have left behind a hefty sheaf of poems, stories, personal testimonies that speak openly of our desire even when that witness could never be published.

What history has not left in any great measure are the shared recollections, confessions, letters of both men in these relationships. One obvious reason for this absence is that writers do not often live with other writers. But there are other reasons, too, which have to do with same-sex love as a taboo even more odious, apparently, to the mainstream than same-sex “promiscuity.”

In 1997, we live in a time in which the gay community has been ravaged by a disease that was flagrantly ignored as long as it was seen as unique to gay men. That plague, it is said even inside the gay “community,” has caused individuals to reassess the freewheeling sex of the ‘70s, in particular, and to come to consider the values of pairing. Meanwhile, politicians across America are falling all over their bilious rhetoric to amend the U.S. Constitution to preclude any members of the same sex from ever enjoying the rights and privileges — the decency of public acknowledgment — of marriage. These same politicians, civil and religious leaders, of course, are vehement in their condemnation of gay “promiscuity.”

Heterosexual attitudes about gay interactions have been among the strongest defining forces affecting how gay men relate to each other. We rebel against a society that tells us our sexual feelings are bad or nonexistent with bold and loud declarations of our sexuality and identity — such as the annual Gay Pride Parade and openly sexual modes of dress like leather or drag. We transgress against their limiting notions of monogamy and marriage by creating our own versions of coupling and congress. (Among cutting-edge queers, pairing exists in many forms. Or as a trendy witticism runs: “Two’s company, three’s a gay couple.”)

But none of these reactions against heterosexual notions are as powerful as the desire two hearts can feel for one another. Throughout a cruel history, men — and women, of course — have been willing to die for that love, and we have.

TWO HEARTS DESIRE is our attempt to portray ourselves in the context of relationship. We call it a “double vision” approach, since each partner is writing about the other; the relationship itself becomes evident in how the two men see one another. The book is a totally unscientific, not-quite-random sample of gay “marriages.”

For one of our couples, who are just starting out, the decision to appear in print was their way of publishing the banns: They are declaring their love in print in a way denied them legally. Another couple has recently broken up after many years, but they write here about their continuing bond. Devotion, courage, and dedication are perhaps most poignant for those whose partners have died or who are dying now, even while they are recording their love. While history has provided ample precedent for gay marriage, TWO HEARTS DESIRE is about the realities of love, of intense and passionate love, in an era of loss mitigated only by our people’s determination to recover, rebuild, and survive.

As such, it is a monument — albeit a monument in miniature — to all those hearts who desire one another.



Matthew Rettenmund  
&  
José Vélez

## I ♥ José — by Matthew Rettenmund

I've never been in love before.

I have said "I love you" to more than one guy. Though I usually wasn't out and out lying, I think I always knew I was just saying that phrase in the hope that if I said it often enough it would come true. Instead, I wound up saying it so freely it didn't really mean much at all, except "I like you a lot," "You're nice," or "Don't stop cuddling me."

I'm the exact opposite of all those people who have such a hard time saying that they love someone. I'm an "I love you" slut.

It wasn't my fault. I found, after starting to date, that gay men who were not primarily interested in one-night-stands — in other words, gay men who wanted to date as opposed to hunt and who could envision finding a lover to settle down with at some point — were extremely trigger happy in the "I love you" department. One guy told me he was falling in love with me the first night we met! This has less to do with my charm, good looks and winning figure than with the feeling of desperation that can descend on gay men as we sit in bars looking for Mr. Right. You sit there long enough and pretty soon the meanest queen can provoke love at first sight.

When I met José, things were different.

We did not meet at a gay bar, we met at a party, which is basically a gay bar with fewer people, more women and softer music — I mean, we still had to engineer an awkward meeting and start getting to know each other from scratch.

But things were also different in how and how quickly we got to know each other.

First of all, I had made so many mistakes with other men — either by deciding to date them in the first place or by saying or doing something that poisoned the relationship prematurely — that I had pretty much gotten all that bullshit out of my system. I wasn't nervous because I'd had enough dates to realize they weren't the end of the world, and also because José was so remarkably real and attitude-free and smart and funny that I knew early on that he and I were going to be important to each other for a long time. I didn't have to try to impress him or try to find something about him to latch on to to make myself fall in love with him. I just had to keep seeing him and calling him in order to fall in love — falling in love with him was all a matter of casual contact.

Most interestingly, we did not say "I love you" for many months. I remember jokingly asking him for permission to introduce him as my "boyfriend" a month into our relationship, thinking he'd laugh and say "Of course." I was just trying to be cute, but his reaction surprised me. He politely asked me not to!

More shocking was the fact that I didn't flip out and become self-conscious over his response. Instead, I realized that he was a person who took words much more seriously than I did. He was someone who used words to express things literally, whereas I used words more impressionistically. Calling him my boyfriend would've been an affectation for me at that point, a joky reference to the fact that we were dating and that there is really no good term for people who have been dating for such a short period of time but who are really liking each other. For José, the word "boyfriend" was tantamount to calling him my "husband."

The only work there has been in our relationship — from my point of view — has been reconciling the way we use words. I have to make sure not to be too flippant in saying things, and José has to make sure not to be too literal. But negotiating words is really second nature to us since we're both writers.

Now if only he would learn to be quiet when I'm watching my shows!

José and I gradually fell in love, and got used to the ways in which we speak and express our feelings. Because we didn't rush things, we didn't say "I love you" until it was the truth. We didn't make ourselves fall in love or attempt to convince each other we were in love, we just plain grew into it until we were in so deep there was no denying it.

Now, after almost 15 months, we are living together and buying couches together and fighting and making up and, well, basically wallowing in each other.

If I'd had any idea that love would be so natural, so layered, so exciting and important, I never would've said "I love you" until I said it to José.

# The Little Things You Do — by José Vélez

This morning, you woke me, whispered in my ear that I was your baby, kissed my forehead and watched me drift away in blissful sleep ...just in time to wake me up again by softly kissing my lips.

Yesterday morning, after you woke me as usual, you wanted to know why was I not interested in “camp” movies, after I fell asleep the night before while watching the queen of camp movies, *Faster Pussycat! Kill! Kill!*

Tonight your eyes were burning for my nipples ....

A month ago, when I had that nasty cold, you got up in the early hours of the morning to get me orange juice and cough medicine. Then you kissed my chest so I would get better.

On Christmas Day, you bought me my first Barbie doll.

You always ask me to read your work.

Every day, you lower your eyes and then look away when you know you have done something that makes me happy.

Sunday afternoon, your inner child danced the hustle with my inner child.

Every night, you say to me, “Vamos a dormir.”

A few weeks ago, you left a message in my work voicemail saying, “I just love you, that’s all.”

Every night, you let me lean my back against your back in bed even when it’s too hot.

On Saturdays, you always drag me to every flea market in town, bribing me with a vanilla cone with sprinkles from Mr. Softee.

Once in a while, your idea of cooking is to order Chinese food.

Every time we watch TV, you bite your fingernails. Sometimes you bite mine.

Your eyes tremble with sadness when we fight.

Every morning, you ask me if you snored all night long, hoping that you did not keep me awake all night. Every morning I am too sleepy to answer, “Yes.”

Every Sunday night, after we stuff our faces with homemade brownies, you tell me you and I are starting a healthy diet the next morning.

Tonight, you came to our room and asked me, “What did I do wrong?” after I submitted you to half an hour of pouting.

The other day at the store, you reminded me that I am your family.

You call me your “boyfriend.”

These are some of the little things you do that make me love you.

Craig Lucas  
&  
Patrick Barnes

## Reality/Fantasy — by Craig Lucas

**REALITY:** My lover and I have been together for 3 months, 3 weeks, and 3 days. He's getting ready to move in, though truth be told he's living here already. In temperament we're not much alike. He's ordinarily calm where I am inflamed, he's patient where I spin my wheels, complacent where I obsess. He has never been in therapy, says he doesn't experience guilt, only the occasionally twinge of shame that he claims is particular to the WASP ethos. I, on the other hand, have been in therapy for 18 years, 17 with the same shrink, and struggle long and hard with my guilt, even for things I haven't done; and I have no shame whatsoever. I believe in the value of analyzing my dreams whereas he asks me what his dreams mean, then balks at the idea of their having meaning. "Dreams," he maintains, "are probably no more than the brain's way of giving you a floor show." He does not bristle at criticism, though he doesn't always seem to be listening either. He frequently says, "What?" after I say something or, worse, he doesn't respond at all. Though he has to have heard, I think he's decided my words don't warrant a response. If I challenge him on this, he will sometimes reveal that he has misheard me and, not being able to make sense out of what I've said, decided to ignore it. Last night we were browsing in a bookstore and he showed me the first line of a poem by John Donne saying it was also the first line of a song from Valley of the Dolls. We laughed, then I turned a page and said, "Here's the poem I read when I scattered Tim's ashes." (Tim was my lover who died of AIDS.) He did not respond to this or take any interest; in fact, he'd already opened another book and was chuckling at something within. He can easily shut out unwanted noise, which I cannot. So maybe he didn't hear me after all.

Here are some things we share: we both like to have sex in the morning, then get up and check our e-mail. We love to read and to work in the garden. He always brushes his teeth and flosses before going to bed, and now I do, too.

**FANTASY:** He apprentices with Stephen Sondheim and grows by leaps and bounds, finding a deep satisfaction in songwriting, which brings not only artistic growth but enormous wealth, making it possible for me to write plays (and only the occasional movie project, which I will do for love alone). Ours becomes one of the great love stories, our names permanently linked in peoples' minds like Beaumont and Fletcher, Marx and Engels, Robbie Baitz and Joe Mantello. And we die in our sleep well into our nineties, still possessing full mental and physical powers, eschewing Nirvana in favor of reincarnation in order that we may fall in love again and inspire others.

**FANTASY:** Somehow the earth's revolutions slow, resulting in a 36-hour day

so that I can sleep ten hours straight before getting up to spend several leisurely hours with him and the dogs before we both go to work; this we do for another 10 hours straight and still have time left over for the shrink, the gym — no, wait, this is a fantasy — we no longer need to go to the gym or the shrink in order to maintain perfect mental and physical equilibrium. He might, but I don't.

REALITY: Sometimes I cry without warning or scream at inanimate objects. He is understanding and says my grieving doesn't threaten him, though he does point out when I'm frightening the dogs. The first night we slept together he told me I could cry in his arms without scaring him or driving him away, and this has proven to be truth. He is lovely and tender when I wail. A year and a half ago, my lover of many years died in my arms and by my hand; we'd agreed I would end his life when the suffering was too great and there was no hope, when his mind was gone. My first two lovers also died of AIDS. A total of 93 friends and colleagues and sex partners have died. This, of course, makes me feel helpless, and I'm sure that my pain makes my lover feel helpless, but he doesn't use it as an excuse to break up with me, which the man I dated before him did; when I asked why he was breaking up with me, he said, "Your grieving makes me feel helpless." I should have said, "Your helplessness makes me grieve," but I was trying to be understanding and saint-like, plus I didn't think of it at the time. He liked to get spanked and sometimes drink his own piss and wear a dog collar; when he had an orgasm he would moan, "Fuck me like the dirty whore I am." He had a pair of rubber shorts and slept on a mattress on the floor. I adored him, but I don't think we were so good for one another. And if he hadn't dumped me, I wouldn't have such a wonderful lover now. This is the sort of logic I often find specious in the mouths of others, but it happens to be the case.

REALITY: We met on January 15th, the same day I met my lover Tim, so I now have exactly the same anniversary I had before. Astonishing. I'm ten years older than he is and sometimes wonder that this will mean for us further along, years and years from now. I guess the fact that I'm thinking about that means I'm hoping we'll still be together. He says I should let him take care of me more. On my birthday card, which he made by hand, he wrote, "I really think you ought to marry me."

FANTASY: I let him take care of me, he doesn't resent me for it, he never sues me for palimony, we marry, he doesn't grow tired of me in bed, we create forever more eloquent and effective ways to express our love, and neither of us ever codifies any of these ways into a theory of relationships.

FANTASY: AIDS has been eradicated; he and I remain monogamous — okay, we have infrequent three-ways with incredibly hunky, sane, non-demanding men with ravenous sexual appetites, who immediately after orgasm and perhaps a little post-coital snuggling return to their country of origin: New

Zealand, Ghana, Finland.

REALITY: I'm afraid I may not have it in me to commit fully to the number of sit-ups and crunches, side-bends and leg-lifts required to obtain "marimba abs." He says I turn him on all the same. At the beginning, he expressed little or no interest in blowing me, but he seems to have been his will to the task; he said he has to fall in love before he wants to do that or takes much pleasure in it. Not me: I greedily wolfed down his cock the first time he would let me. Early on we negotiated what we would and wouldn't allow; I had just had an HIV test, so we went together to get his at this place where they give you results in two hours or two days, I forget. Maybe it's 20 minutes. Anyway, it was very tense and seemed an eternity, but we are both negative. The other day he blew me in the car while I drove, heading north on the Taconic; he peeled back my foreskin with his lips. I have to say it was amazing.

REALITY: My boyfriend does not like to swallow sperm.

FANTASY: My boyfriend loves to swallow sperm.

FANTASY: He will attend one of my plays and cry at the end, saying he finds it painfully beautiful.

REALITY: He comes to one of my plays and cries at the end, saying he finds it painfully beautiful.



## Fantasy/Reality — by Patrick Barnes

FANTASY: He and I live in the country. Full-time. We have very little to no contact with anyone outside our house. Our house is beautiful, of course. Every day we hike up to the top of one of the many small mountains surrounding us. At the top we toss our clothes into a pile on the ground. His skin shivers when it touches cool stone, but I surround him with my arms and hairy chest. At night, we cook, I play the piano, he sings — Ned Rorem or Sondheim (he never lets me play Jerry Herman). In bed we read, kiss, pet, talk, take turns rubbing or scratching backs. When the lights are out, we listen to the wind, or the rain, or the crickets; one dog at our feet, one on the floor. We fall asleep with our feet touching.

REALITY: When I met him, I was working a few nights a week at an over-priced, very in restaurant Midtown. I saw an acquaintance enter and, overjoyed to see someone I liked, I rushed to greet him. When he told me he wanted to introduce me to his dinner companion and told me his name, I was hesitant. He was, after all, someone whose work had always moved me, and who I had found very cute in photographs. But he had the brightest pair of eyes I could remember seeing, and I thought, “Well, he’s living, isn’t he?”

FANTASY: We enjoy sex in semi-public places. We start tame, the steam room of the gym, no big challenge there. Then we move up: the men’s room on the second floor of Barney’s on Madison Avenue. We think about doing it in the last car of an E train late at night, but it seems too porno movie.

REALITY: He gets these jokes. And he loves to tell them to everyone. Like this:

Him: What did the snail say on the turtle’s back?

Guest: (wary) I don’t know ...

Him: Wheeeeeeeeeee!

And I laugh every time, because it’s really funny. But I don’t tell them as well, probably because I don’t love them as much. I love him loving them.

FANTASY: We have been the premiere drag performers of the East Coast and Europe for the past ten years. Some of our noms de plumage have been Chow Chow Loyola, Smoky Schwartz, Snowball Boris, Rhumba Rivera, Wanda S. Iwanda, and Anka Ziway. Once at the Pyramid Club we sang “Sisters” and fucked each other, making our own erections look like strap-ons.

REALITY: When we had our first uncomfortable moment — it wasn’t really a fight — I noticed things that surprised me to notice, like how he was licking his lips a lot, and how he looked confused and hurt. Which really made my heart go out to him more. So he won, I think.

FANTASY: I awaken. I am naked, lying prone on a wooden X. My hands and feet are tied to the ends of each beam. The room is full of famous playwrights, all naked. (David Mamet has a cigar — what will he do with it?) They begin crossing the room, heedless of one another, going faster and faster, and somehow never colliding. (Mamet's cigar never burns anybody.) My love approaches me from behind, pinches my nipples, grabs my underarms, rakes his nails down my thighs. When I feel I cannot take it anymore, he raises his hand in the air and, as one, the other playwrights converge upon me, each making some kind of physical contact with my body (even Arthur Miller) — some of it caressing, some quite intrusive. Then they sit down and write a Pulitzer Prize-winning play about the experience.

REALITY: He has this habit of making me feel like a prince. I mean a real prince.

FANTASY: Physical perfection has not been as difficult to achieve as we may have thought. Once we get used to two hours a day at the gym, it gets addictive. Our body fat is down to 4 percent (we do amazing things with rice & beans). Is it worth it? When I can look at him across the room and see the full curve of his chest, the way his thigh stretches the fabric of his pants; when I can put my arms around him and feel the strength in my biceps as I squeeze, feel the tingles of energy racing down my abdominals as I stretch when he runs his tongue down me; when I can grasp his rolling latissimus dorsi when I enter him — then I say yes. There may be those who deride us, but I say reading Foucault and doing ten perfect bench presses with 100 pounds on each side are analogous.

REALITY: The first time we fucked, when he came, he yelled. Which I thought was just the greatest thing in the world. I always like shouters more than all the others. I'm not saying they should all be shouters. I'm just saying I like the shouters.

FANTASY: Mia Farrow convinced us that adoption is the way to go. We thought we'd stop after Esther and Salim, but then we somehow got the twins, Ottoline and James, and now there are Annie, Ng & Song, and Herb.

REALITY: I once lived with a woman who cried regularly. At night, I would lie next to her and put my arm around her, and she'd begin to sob convulsively. I felt useful. When my relationship with Craig was beginning, we went to see King Lear. I heard short bursts of tears from him sitting next to me in the dark, and I thought I could be useful again. The first night we spent together, he told me about the death of his last lover, and though we were too happy at that moment in the glow of our new company to cry. I told him never to be afraid to cry. Somehow, I don't think he throws himself into crying on me with the same abandon as that woman did, but he's awfully beautiful when he does, his curly hair in my face, his nose pressed into my chest.

FANTASY: We sit on a cliff over the sea during a thunderstorm, and he sings Wagner to me.

REALITY: Our first collaboration was a short sketch for a theater benefit. He decided to satirize the local theater critics. In our first week of dating, he asked me to write a song for the critics to sing after their miraculous conversion from nasty curmudgeons into constructive critics. At first neither of us was sure what kind of song it should be. A few days later, we were eating breakfast when we both looked up simultaneously and said, "How about a gospel song?"

FANTASY: We're in rehearsal for our first Broadway musical. It's been hard; the writing was a lark, fun and breezy; the rewrites a bit more stressful; rehearsals, hell. Our stars, Bill Cosby and Tracey Ullman, are disciplined and professional, but with very definite ideas about the strengths and weaknesses. Our director, Tony Kushner, is tense about this being his first big musical. The show has changed from a bittersweet romance to a rollicking farce. The Times is planning a Sunday Arts & Leisure piece on us, which will probably be just like the one they did on Joe Mantel and Robbie Baitz (only with dogs instead of a cat). We are making sure Sylvia Miles is invited to the opening. It feels as though everyone in New York is poised to attack; and yet, every time the cast sings the opening number, "A Sticky Day in Reykjavik," I thrill.

REALITY: I write upstairs, he writes downstairs. We meet for lunch and show-and-tell.

Arnie Kantrowitz  
&  
Lawrence Mass

# Why I Love Larry — by Arnie Kantrowitz

It's easy to list the flaws of the person you live with after twelve years. He snores, he doesn't take out the garbage, and so on. But it's really a pleasure to recall his assets. It's like counting your blessings.

I'm not sure when it was I knew I was in love with Larry. We had met three times and had had sex twice before we suddenly started to see each other every day. There was a definite attraction (we were having sex four times a day). I remember walking up the street with him soon after that, heads together, totally immersed in whatever we were talking about, when we saw my friend Jim Owles. Later, I asked Jim what he thought. "I think this is it," he said. That's probably when I knew I was in love — as if I needed some external verification.

It was the same thing with Larry's looks. Being attracted to him was the main thing, but I remember stopping to check him out once as I was leaving his apartment. Finally, I announced to him, "Yes, you're handsome." It's really his eyes, dark brown with luxuriant lashes, that make his face handsome, but I was always a sucker for beards like his, and there were wonderful waves in his hair back then. I even liked his little belly. Yet it wasn't until my sister-in-law visited and raised her eyebrows while secretly nodding her appreciation of his looks that I felt sure. I guess I just don't trust my own judgment.

I always said I wanted a brooding artist, and I got one. Larry's a writer as well as a doctor (I like to think my mother would have been happy about that part, even if he is a man), and he's what they used to call "moody." They say you should be careful what you wish for, but I'm glad. I'm moody, too. We've had some magnificent fights, but we've survived. Even after the passion cooled down and we went to a marriage counselor, all we could say to her was that we wanted to stay together. Why? Even when we're mad at each other, we feel like we're partners for life. We're home for each other. That's a feeling worth fighting to keep.

He's got a good mind. He may be so absorbed in his own thoughts that he's not always aware of what I'm saying, but he thinks deeply and carefully, and he's worth talking to. It doesn't hurt that my man is a major asset to our community, either. I enjoy being proud of him. He was a co-founder of Gay Men's Health Crisis and the first person to write about AIDS outside the medical press. He's done many important articles and two volumes of interviews, and a new autobiography. (I'm the happy ending.)

Jim and Vito Russo and I were a tight family before I met Larry. They must have been rough competition for him, but they respected him. And when each of them was stricken with AIDS, he was there, bringing homemade lobster salad to the hospital for Jim and massaging Vito's aching feet. He drove up to Maine and back so we could take Vito on his last trip, and he paid

to take Jim on a long-dreamed of hot-air balloon ride shortly before he died. I knew he was so generous to them because he loved me. How could I not love him back?

He's so busy that he's out every night of the week, but we always find time for our hour together at the end of the day, just cuddling and watching TV. When he worries too much or gets upset, I'm there to soothe him. Sometimes he wonders if I want him to be in a state because he needs me, but I know he needs me whatever state he's in. It's just that he's especially lovable when he's vulnerable.

Whatever mood he's in, I never doubt that Larry loves me. We like to check up anyway. Sometimes after a fight or just out of thin air, one of us will ask the other, "Do you still love me?" The answer is always, "More than ever."

## Life With Arnie — by Lawrence Mass

Just like in the 1950s movies we like to fall asleep to, the ones we fell in love with during the years when we were always falling in love, we fell in love at first sight. Picture (and sing) “Some Enchanted Evening.” Actually, sight may not be exactly the right word since it was in a dark cubicle at the baths. My first lover, a priest, had advised me that this was not an environment to look for love, and I could certainly see what he meant. Arnie and I met in circumstances of fantasy, but the connection we established was so strong that we decided to get acquainted. Instead of killing the attraction, as so often happens, this ignited a full-blown (no pun) love affair that ended in something greater yet: the first and only true life-partnership I have known.

Though the hot sex was the foundation of our bond, the falling in love was a little more gradual. I remember the moment — when my otherwise hunky, hirsute fantasy was explaining to me what a ruggelach is (that’s how disconnected I was from my ethnicity). Looking deep into my eyes, I told him that’s what he was: my little Jewish pastry. Fourteen years later, he’s still my “roogy” and our love talk is still a genuine measure of our intimacy.

Our love affair was also an alliance, a partnership in struggles we had already decided were the worthiest of our lives and times. My friendship network had consisted mostly of closet cases, gay men who exploited their community for sexual, social, and career advantage but who wouldn’t extend an inch for the movement. How privileged and ennobled I felt to be connected with such a distinguished and heroic activist, with whose writing in *The Advocate* I had already bonded. When Arnie moved in and our life-partnership, our marriage, became established, I was likewise thrilled and honored to get to know my in-laws (Arnie’s two closest friends): Vito Russo and Jim Owles — giants, like Arnie, of the early post-Stonewall Gay Liberation Movement. This was my family. Talk about Gay Pride!

And the hot sex? Well, nothing lasts forever. Besides, we discovered there are better things — like eating. Actually, after fourteen years, the romance has endured, even as realities settle in. The toughest of these, I think, has been the areas of interest and pleasure we don’t share, like opera, which Arnie simply isn’t into, and film, which I am into but much less than him. Likewise physical exercise and sports. We both have a big need for independence and, yes, Virginia, we do grapple with boredom.

Is that all? Well, it’s not easy to find anything negative to say about “my Danish” (which plays on “my sweet-ish” and conjures up the rainbow of cinnamon, brown sugar, cream and toast that Arnie’s eyes and beard are) but, if you insist, I suppose we could find a few nits to pick. With his penchant for stand-up comedy and overall talent for holding forth, I sometimes feel crowded out. Also, Arnie has been known to complain — unlike moi of

course! Beyond all the small stuff, what we have are two of the most precious things life has to offer. We have our own family — each other — and what, as friends of Dorothy, we were always looking for: home.

Through the thick (the thin has pretty much passed) — the passage of so many years together, the deaths of Vito, Jim, and countless other brothers in our community from AIDS — do we still love each other? Well, as we put it to each other at least several times a day, “More than ever.” Now, that we agree on!



Reggie Cabico  
&  
Guillermo Castro

It's not so much his kiss I recall as much as his voice —  
by Reggie Cabico

a shy pebble  
rippling water.  
Each phrase  
a school of  
startled  
ginger fish  
shimmering  
through the  
telephone line,  
I'd like to invite  
you to my place  
& immediately  
I became a  
frightened puppy  
in a tropical  
rain forest.

Only to my surprise,  
I was in Brooklyn,  
reading Lorca  
in his living  
room, calmly  
sipping tea.  
He played me  
Joni Mitchell  
crooning the lines  
he loved  
when his falsetto  
cracked mid-air  
& we both  
laughed.

Resting a photo  
album on his lap,  
he pulled  
a picture  
of himself,  
a young  
boy swimming

in a Buenos Aires  
blue reflecting  
pool. I wanted  
to lick the nape  
of his neck, instead  
said, You'll have to  
teach me how to swim,  
I'm afraid of water ...  
when he grabbed  
me & placed  
his lips to mine  
our most perfect  
palates open,  
pulling away  
to catch  
our breath.

You have to be  
relaxed, he says  
otherwise  
you'll drown.

I kiss him  
again, feeling  
ribs beneath  
his sweatshirt,  
our hearts racing  
the way  
a diver freefalls,  
plunging  
in a sea  
of pearls.

# You & I Are Guests of Garcia Lorca — by Guillermo Castro

at his parents' summer residence, Huerta de San Vicente. Federico stayed with us during his visit to New York last year and now he's graciously

returning the gesture. Wearing straw hats with white linen suits we arrive at the village's outdoor market in the main square. Federico is welcomed

like the local celebrity he is, greeting everyone by name. To our amazement, he introduces us to the crowd as each other's "cousins."

Vendors stare at your long black hair or perhaps my pants are too tight. I try to divert attention by praising the quality of their merchandise.

The phalanx of an approaching storm can be seen over the yellow sierras. The sun surrenders now — there's only enemy sky above. We leave the market

and walk up a steep, narrow street as Lorca designs tomorrow's plans: a trip to Barcelona to catch a bullfight. I want to say I can't take

the sight of blood; instead ask him about Emilio, a former lover. Federico grows sullen. Even the moles on his wide face seem like little

sad eyes. We stop to catch our breath. "Juntos pareceis angeles," he says, suddenly smiling. Together you look like two angels.

Edmund White  
&  
Michael Carroll

## Meeting Michael — by Edmund White

I met Michael just a year and a few weeks after the death of Hubert, the French lover I'd been with for five years. I'd been very lonely for a year. My agent, Maxine Groffsky, had received Michael's letter to me and passed it on to me with a note: "Looks like a live one."

Indeed, he was — small, muscular, dazzling smile, something hooded about the eyes that makes people imagine he's my son. I was wildly attracted to his looks right away, but I was determined not to make a pass at him immediately; he might easily detest older men, or he might think of me as a mentor or parent and be horrified by any tacky, improper advances. Of course I did say, "You're welcome to stay with me, but unfortunately I already have some French guy staying in the guest room, but you can sleep in my bed and I promise to behave." I think I "behaved" until dawn.

I was meeting my gay Texas cousin, Austin, and his lover for the first time that Easter, and Michael, as it turned out, had been raised in the same town of 20,000 as Austin. Other signs were equally auspicious. Our age difference didn't interest him very much, not even as an erotic theme, and right away I felt like his contemporary, at least when we were alone. He was tender, but not very demonstrative at first, although fortunately he didn't mind being doted on (most men do mind). He'd read everything of mine and had an eidetic memory, which he did his best to play down. He was thirty but had a kid's body, so I could realize all my pedophile fantasies without outraging morality, including my own morality.

He turned out to be as sincere, sexy and imaginative in his writing as he was in life — what a relief! He wasn't as compulsively sociable as I — who could be? (After all, I'm the person who said, when he heard that Henry James bragged that one year he'd dined out three hundred times in London, "What did he do the other sixty-five nights?") But at least Michael was willing to humor my major vice — entertaining. Mainly he was and is steadily loving. When I was young I pursued men who rejected me — perhaps my imagination fed on absence and suffering. But now I'm thrilled that Michael reciprocates my love. For me love has always been confused with gratitude. Since I met Michael I feel grateful every day.

## Meeting Edmund — by Michael Carroll

The first time I met Edmund, I had just traveled on an overnight bus to Paris. At the time, I was teaching English at a Czech university, and Ed and I had been communicating through the mail. That is, I'd written him a fan letter through his agent, and he'd responded generously (just as, so it turns out, I've seen him respond to many others since I began living with him). I had not sent him a photo, but in that first letter I'd described my life and my coming-out experiences as a kid in the South.

When I arrived in Paris, the Thursday before Easter, the weather was beautiful and spring-like, and everything that afternoon looked perfect for meeting my idol. I checked into a hostel, left a message on Ed's answering machine, and went off to see Paris for the first time. When I got back to the hostel from the Champs Elysees, where I'd climbed to the top of the Arc de Triomphe, there was a message at the desk that I should go around to Edmund White's at five, giving me exactly an hour. I rushed, all sweaty, nervous and sick, up to my room to wash my face, change and get ready ....

I'd already forgotten the European system of floor-counting and rang at the apartment below. Nonetheless, I heard foot-thumps, rumbling, and a door opening on the floor above — and then my name being called, in exactly the voice I'd imagined. I went up awkwardly, grinning. I brought white tulips, just like in one of his stories; delighted, he exclaimed, "What lovely white roses!" and went off to find a vase.

How could I have not loved him immediately? The instant I saw him on the landing, I adored his preppy, bill-paying look, his blue oxford-cloth shirt, and wire-frame glasses, his sweet "What, me worry?" smile, and his immediate warmth. Had that not been enough, the fact that he swept me off for a weekend — in Paris — of dinners, soirees, and gatherings, had me at his table on Easter Sunday to meet kin, and spoiled me, was plenty, but not the ultimate reason. Now we live together, making a life in harmony, and I know there's nowhere else to go each time I leave but always back home to Paris.

Mark Thompson  
&  
Malcolm Boyd



# Mash Note for Malcolm — by Mark Thompson

What a difference thirty years can make. Time enough for two major wars, a world-wide Depression, and more popular culture than anyone would care to remember. Thirty years — our age difference — the span that separates me and you.

Our meeting was implausible enough, a chance encounter that led to an alliance none of our respective friends could ever have predicted. It was the beginning of the changes. It took years just to shuffle the pages of our respective little black books, melding the names that needed keeping into one address book, into mutual acquaintances. Rearranging the furniture, the books, and all the other stuff was a lot easier. Somehow it all worked. And lingering doubts, encouraged by the naysayers in our lives, have by now faded away with their phone numbers.

We've been going — indeed, growing — strong together for over a decade now. I like to think we've now transcended all the early fears about our two-man generation gap, though it does exist. You were entering an Episcopal seminary the year I was born. I was in grammar school studying the history of slavery while you were actually in the South on the early freedom rides, protesting against its lingering noxious effects. The year I began my professional life (as an openly gay man), you decided to come out in mid-life, almost losing your career in the process.

There's so much you've done that I have only read about. On the other hand, you'll never know what it was like to grow up as a child of television and The Bomb, or that taking LSD was a sacrament, at least for some of us. But these are minor matters, surface fluctuations on the sea of what goes on between us deep inside.

It's there, on the inner playing field, where time doesn't matter, that we really meet. I'm older than you in some significant ways (what a relief it must be not to have to be The Wise One all the time). My strengths match your vulnerabilities, and I get to be fatherly. We father one another in so many ways. And because we are queer men, we mother each other just as well. What a romp our inner kids are having! Our flesh is growing frail — what with you well into your eighth decade and me counting T-cells — but inside, together, we are powerfully twinned.

Some cynics still prattle about our “mixed marriage”: intergenerational, of contrasting origins and different faiths.

But what difference does any of that matter, when I love you so much? The joke, I say, is on them. Because only you and I can laugh the way we do.

# Moments from a Gay Marriage (On Our Tenth Anniversary) — by Malcolm Boyd

Your eyes are closed in sleep

You look relaxed, happy and content to be with me. You share my time and space, being and heart.

I like to sit quietly with you; share a meal, friends, laughter, a film; shop with you on Saturdays at the market; hold you in my arms.

Now I look away from your face because I have no wish to intrude on your private dreams or startle you with my intensity if you should awaken.

But the clock radio by our bed tells me I must get up to start a new day. I don't stir. I am grateful you are warm and dear, sweet and sharing, and love me. I am happy to start this new day with you.

It's pleasant sharing a drink after a busy day

Shall I tell you the bad news? I heard today that a friend of ours is very ill. I'll wait.

This moment is a nurturing one, a chance to catch our breath and unload emotional baggage. You tell me about a problem at the office. Actually, I've heard the same story a number of times before. You don't seem to realize it.

I describe a curious phone call I received, a new idea that I find exciting, and an unexpected hurt that came my way and perplexed me.

We sit silently.

Everything seems perfect

It scares the hell out of me. I know it never can be. So I wish we could have a small quake in our relationship to open up some cracks.

Trouble in paradise comes to mind. Yet I don't want trouble and don't need paradise. To hell with absolutes. All I want is easy, comfortable earth tones; I can live without reds and brilliant turquoises, solid shining golds that knock my eyes out.

I am trying to make a life with you, shorter on sensation, longer on ease. God, I never asked for perfection.

Is this what I want?

You're working in the garden

Yesterday we bought new plants that you are now placing in the ground. I'm inside compiling our shopping list. Shortly we begin our weekly visit to the market.

Our life together has settled into a predictable routine of sorts. Chores need to be done. The home needs caring. Bills must be paid, food cooked, laundry washed and dried, garbage collected, the telephone answered, moods

sorted out, nonverbal language understood, hurts and wounds from the outer world examined and healed, space allowed, hopes renewed, and love nurtured.

Through all this you remain wholly and utterly an original. You are unpredictable, open and vulnerable. So am I. Any routine in our mutual life is subject to variables and change.

I realize how thankful I am for your life, how precious is our time together and what an extraordinary adventure we have embarked upon. I am astonished by its mystery and pragmatism, awesomeness and simple joy.

I wouldn't have missed loving you for all the world.

Richard Labonté  
&  
Asa Dean Liles

# My Housekeeper — by Richard Labonté

I met Asa Dean Liles in May of 1993, when I hired him as my housekeeper. We sat on the sunny back patio steps at A Different Light Bookstore in San Francisco for the interview. I thought his then-boyfriend was cute, and eyed him as Asa and I discussed domestic duties.

I have since learned that Asa is not a housecleaner by either instinct or desire, but he takes pride in his work: every Friday afternoon when I arrived home, my apartment was just right. He was a fine housekeeper.

Some Fridays, I came home before my housekeeper was gone for the day. Some Fridays, he would be in my library, watching black and white movies on the American Movie Channel. Some Fridays, we would share tea and talk a while. He was a friendly housekeeper, and told me I was one of his favorite accounts.

One fall day in 1993, a cold foggy San Francisco Friday, my housekeeper arrived late, found me at home, apologized for his tardiness and low energy. We canceled cleaning, brewed a pot of tea. You know books and you know writing, he said as we sipped, and he asked if he could read from his journal. He was my housekeeper, and he wrote with an astonishing shy and awkward clarity and strength.

Often I would come home to a soft light left on in my bedroom, a perfect pile of pillows on my bed, once flowers on the kitchen table. My housekeeper was a thoughtful man.

In December, my housekeeper was breaking up with the boyfriend. My then-housemate and I invited him to use a spare room. My housekeeper was now a houseguest.

In January 1994, my housekeeper houseguest and I went out for dinner. Are we in love? we asked. Yes, we answered. We went home and slept in his bed on the floor. My housekeeper was my lover. And we slept together every night.

In March, we broke up. My lover was now a housemate housekeeper. In May, my housemate asked to be my lover again. In July, we broke up. He was my housemate again, and less of a housekeeper.

In January, 1995, we bought a Ford Ranger. My housemate was now my lover again — and my chauffeur, since I don't drive. In September 1995, we motored through Alaska and Western Canada for three weeks. In October, we went to the pound, and my housemate ransomed a nine-month-old mixed breed. Percy completes our family, he said.

In January 1996, my housekeeper/housemate/lover stopped working. The low energy of 1993 was now an intense, cloying fatigue. In May 1996, we bought a sleigh bed, which fills his bedroom.

I came home tonight, a Friday night, to — let's tell the truth — a less-

than-pristine apartment. Look, Percy, look, Asa said to the whirling dervish dog. Richard's home. Richard's home! The family is together.

Late at night, Asa asks if I will miss him when he's gone. Will I take care of the dog? Who will clean my house? Do my laundry, rearrange the furniture? What will happen to the truck? Will I remember?

Many mornings, I crawl into his bed at dawn, my life wrapped in his, his in mine, Percy in ours. I won't ever forget my housekeeper. My houseguest. My housemate. My lover.

# Notes from the Housekeeper — by Asa Dean Liles

From notes left by Asa for Richard, on his pillow, under his teacup, slipped inside the book he's reading, handed to him, read to him, written to him over the years.

September 1993, a Housekeeping Note:

Richard, I didn't match your socks because most of them don't match. I hope that's OK. P.S. I came late so I only took thirty of the forty bucks.

A Wretched Day in Early August 1994:

Richard, As I have mentioned, words are not enough, inadequate. Be that as it may, I must mention that I am experiencing RAGE! HATE! ... confusion is a by-product. Do not be afraid. AIDS, massively poor self-esteem, demons, death of friends ... my traps affect us, but they are mine. They are completely about me. Be patient. I do know who loves me.

Some Fucking Weird Day in October 1994:

Hello. The last sheet of one's notebook should always go to a worthy cause. So ... I just feel like saying hello and hugging you. Actually, as much as you hate it, just saying thank you for us, our relationship, our love, our friendship.

Undated 1995:

Sweetheart. You know, you said something that has been in my heart all day, that I was a part of your present life, and your future. It was perhaps a simple statement to you, but its depth is warm and profound to me. Thank you for many things but mostly thank you for you.

P.S. I'll be home soon.

Summer 1995:

Ssshhh. Let's be quiet. Richard is trying to read and work. Just wanted to say, I really like it when we are both at home together. Signed, Asa Bigmouth.

Later That Same Note:

I find myself coming out into our long narrow hallway, at my end of the house, and looking down to see if you are sitting at the table in the kitchen. You know, when I created that space I got many wonderful obvious gifts, but I also got an unexpected gift ... seeing you, Richard, sitting happily in our home. It makes me smile.

December 12, 1995, Asa's Birthday:

How can that be? You apologize for not being here for my birthday

dinner, and I have to set you right. You are always here. You are always here surrounding and holding our family together.

Undated 1996:

I fall into spells of quiet despair and ailing desires ... feeling like I don't belong anywhere. But here you are (very late flight home from New York), sick and not feeling well at all ... I'm washing towels for you and making tea for you and talking to the dog about you. I do belong. Whatever happens, this is my family, taking care of you and Percy.



Tom Bianchi  
&  
Mark Prunty

# My Magnificent Other — by Tom Bianchi

I have made so many pictures of Mark Prunty — whose photograph in *In Defense of Beauty* is captioned, *My Magnificent Other*. I've never tired (although he has from time to time) of capturing his beauty on film. But pictures do not always speak a thousand words. So a few words.

When I first met Mark five years ago, I thought he'd be great for a few dates if I could talk him into that, but the real purpose of our first meeting was to photograph him diving for a series of drawings I was making. Trying to be honorable, I asked him to a party (since I thought he'd be fun to seduce) before asking him to take his clothes off for the sake of art. On the night of our first date, a stranger emerged from the dance floor, walked up to us and said, "I just wanted to tell you what a beautiful couple you are." We said thanks and he immediately disappeared back into the crowd. An angel sent to tell us — me — that perhaps something profound was possible?

Mark was all wrong for me on paper. He was too young and beautiful. I did not know then, although Mark knew, that he was the older soul. He is teaching me many lessons. He told me that he knew we had been together many times in past lives, but had never gotten it quite right before. This, he told me, was out chance to get it right.

Mark knows that he deserves a lover who will support him as he grows in spirit and comes into the full appreciation of his talents. On his terms. And he gives me a fair measure of his patience and suspension of judgment in return. This gives me the grace to make a parallel journey.

Most important, I have learned that I can rely on his word. He is, above all, a man of his word. If he tells me that he absolutely will not balance our checking account, I can bank on it. This character virtue allows me to trust him with my heart.

Three years ago, as I was sinking with an HIV infection raging out of control — which he could see while I could not — he turned to me in bed one night and said, "I know you are leaving. I want you to know that I will wait for you to come back. Forever."

And I did come back. What a fool I'd have been to deny the power of his love

# Happy 4th Anniversary — by Mark Prunty

Tom

The support and love that you give me to grow and experience life is a gift that I cherish. Your passion, energy, and devotion for life and your work is worth a thousand words of loving praise. You are a wonderful and generously caring man.

My love and admiration,  
your partner and friend,

Mark

Douglas Sadownick  
&  
Tim Miller

# Leaving Tim — by Douglas Sadownick

I met Tim in 1982, during the early days of AIDS. I think I fell more in love with him than he did with me. Our generation was anti-clone. “Fags against facial hair” stuff. To be radical, you got hitched. Generally, I went for Latinos or other Mediterranean types, even Jews like me. I had never meant a WASP from Whittier. He seemed to lack the guilt and shame I took for granted in myself. That gave me a boner.

At some point, Tim suffered a life crisis. His father died; a performance piece at BAM didn’t go so well. This was just as our good friends were getting sick from AIDS. I perfected the role of emotional caretaker. I did not think I was replaying a role my mother had also played and secretly resented. But I was.

I’m not going into all this to complain. My 13 years with Tim were rich and beautiful. We moved to Venice Beach, California, and got a black lab mutt, named Buddy (who’s still with us). Tim grew tomatoes. We had sex all the time, especially after afternoons at the beach. We rallied each other during career lulls. We shared money. We ate pasta and garlic and went to the movies and had big parties and even performed a duet together, Buddy Systems.

People envied that aspect of the marriage, but there was a shadow side. Feelings of rage for being dependent on someone are normal in every relationship, but too few make a safe place for disagreeable feelings. Ours was no different. So the feelings of shame and annoyance and rage that never got processed loaded up with energy and exploded in stupid, post-coffee fights. I’d do something wrong like arrive late to an event. (Before therapy, I was very flaky). He’d feel injured — terribly so — and he’d blame me. I’d try to defend myself (“I didn’t mean to be late on

purpose!”) until an impasse would be reached and then I’d cry, “I’m sorry.” It took a breakdown to stop his unrelenting shaming. Like an angry parent, he’d stop being so stern only when he’d kiss away my tears and we’d have sex again.

Like most men, Tim and I split off our inferior personality from ourselves and projected it on others. We did not do what all conscious couples ought to do: realize they’re in a foursome. As a primitive defense against owning his own secret worthlessness, he projected his worthlessness onto me. I was a sponge for such

projections, given my own cultural DNA. As a primitive defense against owning my own secret potential, I forced him into the role of being alternately an idealization and a “bad dad.”

Because my life was so fucked, I went into therapy. My analyst rubbed my nose into my shame until I saw it, separated from it, and began to treat it like

an autonomous personality that needed my attention. For most people, their ego and their inferiority are meshed. Too few wake up to this muddle. The more I learned about partnering such feelings, the more I refused to allow Tim to dump his hidden shame onto me. Sometimes I had to raise my voice call him all kinds of names to stick to my guns. The relationship could not sustain this new approach. Ending thirteen years of marriage, I moved out.

I don't want to make Tim the demon here. I enjoyed being a doormat. And like all doormats, I harbored a secret wish to castrate the bully. I did a lot of castrating. I got something out of being so needed by Tim, who never showed his need, except in a rage. This is called the psychology of the unconscious. In other words, I do not think love is possible without also allowing for hurt, envy, and even hatred. The couple that doesn't make a seat for those feelings at the table is not only unconscious, but working these feelings out covertly.

A year after our separation, we are learning to see each other for real; each person gets to own his own anxiety and not blame each other for it. I do not know anything that is more important in relationships than this. Sometimes you only learn about individuality by divorcing. These days we walk down to the ocean with our dog, meeting each other halfway between our Venice Beach apartments. We talk about everything, including the places inside that feel revolted or suffocated or nuts when around each other. Sex is sweeter now than ever as we explore each other as if we are as we have always been: strangers to each other who seem wed despite how many tears we've made each other cry.

# He/I/We — by Tim Miller

He was named Doug by his parents.

I was named Tim by mine.

We were named Doug & Tim in our relating.

He had a diploma and a boyfriend when we met.

I had a career and an ex-boyfriend when we met.

We had some eggnog at a Christmas party when we met.

He was twenty-three and was writing about George Eliot.

I was twenty-four and was reading Machiavelli.

We were twenty-something and we would make each other a life study.

He would teach me how to use a computer.

I would teach him how to grow tomatoes.

We would try to teach each other what kind of men to become.

He was frustrated with our sex the first year (no dirty talk!).

I was unsatisfied with our sex the first year (he didn't like fucking/getting fucked!).

We would have sex with each other thousands of times (I did my math, for those of you who are wondering).

He was not my first Jewish boyfriend, just the best.

I was, he (the Fiction Writer) swore, the first WASP he had ever met.

We made the playing of "Jews & Christians" an Olympic Event.

He wished, in our first year, we could spend more time together.

I had to, in our first year, go to my house alone on Sunday night.

We moved in together before our second anniversary.

He would never feel that I properly fell in love with him.

I would always feel that he didn't see "the gestures I do make."

We would play out these positions for many years.

He was sometimes late (Mediterranean Time), and I would have an abandonment attack and get very mad.

I was sometimes distant (stuck in the emotional freezer at Valhalla), and he would get impatient.

We were (and are) sometimes too hard on each other.

He helped me figure out the story that I had to tell.

I helped him find the time and air to write.

We helped each other find our strongest voice even when its sound made us cover our ears.

He wrote books in the private glow of the monitor's screen.

I made performances and got on planes and stood, lit by the public follow-spot, on tiptoes at the edge of the stage.

We became more different and more alike with each summer and winter.

He raised an issue.

I raised my voice.

We raised a fine dog together (the heir to the family fortune).

He came home covered in blood after getting bashed while cruising.

I came home with a broken arm after slipping on rocks having public sex at the nude beach in Palos Verdes.

We waited, in injury or in health, for the other in a number of queer emergency rooms.

He went with me to get our test results in Hollywood.

I held his dreidel and magic books and prayed while he was inside.

We went home and looked at the ocean and thought of our dead friends and lovers.

He carried my hard feelings and would cry for both of us.

I paid the bills and resented having to wear the watch to bed.

We found each other made-to-order in psychic central casting.

He got me (finally) to go to therapy.

I got him (escape from NY) to move to California.

We got one another (as much as we dared) to go deep under each other's skin.

He became rigid and judgmental and harsh (I sometimes felt).

I became shut-down and dependent and in denial (he sometimes felt).

We became familiar with shouting across those canyons.

He moved out, called the moving truck, thus he left me.

I forced him, by my actions, to leave, thus I left him.

We live now down the street from each other at the edge of a great sea.

He called me tonight and we talked for a long, long time.

I felt my mouth so sad and full of things I didn't know how to say.

We sit at midnight, joined by many years, separated by a few blocks in Venice, California.



# Michael Bronski & Walta Borawski

*Walta Borawski and I met in the New York Club Baths on Sunday evening/early Monday morning, June 23, 1975. We both lived in Boston but did not know one another, even though we had mutual friends. We had even attended the same party two nights earlier, but had not spoken. We met in the steam room and I, having removed my eye-glasses, did not even recognize the man I had admired from a distance the previous Friday evening. We were together until Walta's death on February 9, 1994.*

— Michael Bronski

# Trying to Write a Love Poem for Michael Bronski — by Walta Borawski

Since most of my words go to describe  
loves that fail, tricks who come & go,  
it's no surprise I have no poems for you.

Shall I, trying to write one, say: You  
are the man who stole white lilacs from  
Harvard to help me find spring in a

dull season? Or that three years ago we  
met in a bath house in New York City, strangers  
making love in the shelter of sauna & steam?

Would it be too silly to say I like to think  
we're Leonard & Virginia Woolf? Don't worry —  
I'll not tell which of us is Virginia. But

if I suffer a total breakdown after trying  
to write you this poem — & if you  
drop all work on your next essay to

put me together, take care of my cat, they'll  
know. Meanwhile, you should know that  
when I see aged couples clutching each

other walking quick as they can from  
muggers & death — I see us. & that if you  
die first, someone will have to, like they

would a cat without hope or home, put me to,  
as it's sometimes called, sleep; & though you  
don't believe in heaven, & taught me how empty

& odd my own plan for it was, I imagine we've  
already known it — at the baths, in your  
loft bed; in stolen lilacs, in each stroke you

give my cat, my cock; & though I'm agnostic  
now, I never question why the archangel who  
sent down the devil is called Saint Michael.

# Remembering Walta — by Michael Bronski

On February 10, 1994, the morning after Walta died, I sat at the computer to write down things I remembered. I was afraid I would forget. I was afraid of losing more than I already had. I didn't know what else to do.

- 1) Going shopping in Harvard Square in the afternoons.
- 2) Making bacon, eggs and toast before he went to work in the morning.
- 3) Going on errands to CVS, Barsamian's, and the video store, and being annoyed when he spent too long looking.
- 4) Going to the Health Service and holding his arm the first times he had trouble walking.
- 5) Listening to him talk to his mother on the phone and getting impatient with her.
- 6) His pleasure in looking at jewelry at the shop under the Brattle movie theater.
- 7) When he was getting sick, his pleasure at buying a silver cross and the pewter perfume-pendant at the Old Cambridge Baptist Church fair.
- 8) His anger when I gave him the VCR for our tenth anniversary, and he had only bought me a record.
- 9) His talking to Marilyn over the back porch.
- 10) Going to see Little Women at the Harvard Square Theater when he had conjunctivitis; our third "date."
- 11) How he was so happy with the "Barbra on Broadway" album that he had to go out for a walk after only one side, he was so excited.
- 12) How he cried in the beginning of Sunday in the Park with George.
- 13) My being in the bathtub and his rushing out to the Brattle in hopes of seeing Jay at a late-night screening of La Dolce Vita.
- 14) How when I asked him at dinner what he was thinking about his saying that he was thinking of how hard it was to have AIDS.
- 15) His "waking up" after the spinal tap cleared the fluid from his brain and wanting Chinese food.
- 16) His being angry at me when I came home tired on the Saturday morning after seeing Vince.
- 17) His eagerness to please Jim.
- 18) His leaving Peter Tenney the rose I gave to him and not understanding why I was angry.
- 19) Driving in his VW to NYC with Terry and going to Amsterdam Avenue laughing.
- 20) How excited he was to see Leer with Ethyl Eichelberger.
- 21) Going to look at the Christmas windows at Jordan Marsh after seeing Jim in the hospital on Christmas morning.

- 22) How hurt he was after reading my postcard to Jim Davis.
- 23) How angry he was when I was on the phone with Jim Davis.
- 24) How angry he was when I fell asleep upstairs on his bed and he slept down here.
- 25) How hard it was when we were not getting along and we went to see Lumiere, and I fell asleep.
- 26) The pleasure he got shopping with Richard Lang and buying the silk jackets.
- 27) How he loved the Waterman fountain pen Andrea gave him.
- 28) How he used to write what had happened during the day in his notebooks on the back porch; a simple telephone call from Allison or a change in plans to go to the doctors.
- 29) His letter to Jay that is hardly legible because he no longer had what the doctors called "motor control."
- 30) His writing the poem to me when Chris was here, when he could barely hold the pen and how thrilled he was when Chris wrote the poem down and I could read it.
- 31) How upset he was when he could not find his gold ring I gave him for our anniversary and how grateful he was when I did find it.
- 32) How excited he was when Sherman made a videotape of our Christmas dinner and presents.
- 33) Sitting in the car when I went to buy the herbs.
- 34) Sitting on the steps of the YWCA after the reading, when he had trouble walking, and talking to Assotto Saint.
- 35) Sitting with John Preston, having a cigarette when he should have been at his reading at OutWrite.
- 36) Asking me on the phone if we had spoken about Jean Rhys yet the first time we talked after tricking at the baths.
- 37) How happy he was when his letters appeared in the Times and the Globe.
- 38) When he threw up in Dr. Navia's waiting room, and when Chris was with us at MGH.
- 39) How he tried to get up the energy to enjoy the dahlias his last summer.
- 40) How he spent time dressing for the Nina Simone concert: silk shirt, jewelry, black jeans. His standing up, very shaky, to applaud during the concert.
- 41) How we would wave to one another at the train station when one of us went on a trip.
- 42) The time he had to sit down by the frozen foods in Stop and Shop when he felt faint in April of 1992.
- 43) How crazy he was in Stillman Infirmary the time he became hyper and thought he was on acid and wouldn't sit down even though they threatened to restrain him.
- 44) How exhilarated he was on our bike rides along the Charles River.
- 45) How beautiful he looked when he insisted on walking into Joslin Clinic himself, proud not to have to use the cane.

46) How intently he sat on the back porch and wrote poems, and how pleased he was when he found the right word, the right breath.

Paul Monette  
&  
Winston Wilde

# Notes to Wake Up To — by Paul Monette and Winston Wilde

Good morning, Buck-a-roo.  
I've taken your red wool shirt to be wrapped  
in your warm arms this morning.  
Don't forget your Advil.  
Love you, "Honey."  
W.

\*

Dear Dr. Monette,  
Thanks for my report card.  
It made me cry this morning.  
You meanie. You nice guy. You dildo.  
You groovy Buck-a-roo.  
I fucking love you.  
Gush squirt gush, went this little piggie, all the way home.

\*

12/25/90  
My buckaroo shaman beloved —  
Let the sea thunder & all that is in it.  
What we've done in the last 6 weeks is what they all say can't happen yet, &  
that's because they spend their whole lives waiting for "yet."  
To us, anywhere & anything in '91.  
I love you like the sea thunders.  
XX Paul

\*

Paulie —

You are the coolest.  
We need us.  
Sorry I fell asleep  
on you, buck-a-roo.  
I was tye-red.

I'm not okay, you're not okay.

But we is way okay.  
(Remember that one today.)

So — to the gym, Abbey, etc.  
I'll call.

Mucho Smoocho,  
Winnie

\*

Dear Sir,  
I'm feeling much better, thanks to your kind care.  
I had a mid-size workout, and am off to the Flabby  
w/ BECOMING A BUTCH-BOTTOM.  
Back by noon.  
— Doody

\*

6/15/91

Have I told you lately that I love you?

Well, not today yet, so I love you today, all the way to Santa Barbara and back. The only itch that 7 months have given me is the itch to live, cherishing this knockabout harmony that we make. the dread banality of the world is all about us like a swarm of mosquitoes, so thank you for being my island & for letting me be yours.

There isn't a minute of us that I would change. Onward, buckaroo. xx P.

\*

6-19-91

My dearest lives many lives —  
Thank you for your spontaneity last night. I had fun with you, even with your ecco-homo-weirdo stuff. You have no lesion. You have no more shortness of breath. We are weary from life's trials and death's toll.

You should be very thankful for your prolific accomplishments in the last few days, for your healing ribs and medical triumphs, for the love in your life and for twooo stooooopid dogs. — W.



Christopher Isherwood  
&  
Don Bachardy

# From October — by Christopher Isherwood

## *October 1, 1979*

Don and I both suspect that we communicate with each other during sleep — perhaps as two consciousnesses which are no longer aware of their daytime identities or the difference in their physical ages and can therefore enjoy being together without any forebodings about the future. This theory would explain why I often wake in a state of otherwise inexplicable happiness.

## *October 2*

Running down the street by myself, past neighbors walking or standing outside their houses, I make a conscious effort to run springily, lightly. This isn't exactly vanity, at least, not the usual kind — I'm too aware of my baggy old belly and thinning legs for that. No — it's an effort to reassure all who see me that old age isn't necessarily grim and crippling; they needn't dread it. Of course, this is putting them on, in many cases — for some of us there are nasty surprises in store — but it still seems preferable to being a memento mori on crutches or in a wheelchair or shuffling along head down and bent double.

I came back from the beach feeling great, but the greatness quickly turned into contended sleepy relaxation. By the time Don was ready to draw me I was starting to yawn. The long vertical plastic slats of his studio windowshades soon produce optical illusions. Don appears to be sitting inside a cage of slats — one row immediately behind him, another row between him and me. The effect is dreamlike and powerfully soporific. I droop and drowse.

So the first two drawings were unsatisfactory. Discouraged, we decided on another sitting in the evening. This time, I sipped rum and was inspired to try an experiment. Don often describes his work as a confrontation. He himself, with a pen gripped in his mouth ready for use when it is needed instead of a brush, reminds me of a pirate carrying a dagger between his teeth while boarding the enemy. He seems to be attacking the sitter. So now I counter-attacked. Summoning up all my latent hostility, I glared at him unwaveringly, with accusing eyes. While he was working, he didn't seem to be noticing this. Yet he recorded it. The finished drawing is scary; my old face is horrible with ill will. Most satisfactory.

## *October 5*

Both Don and I make a practice of weighing ourselves every morning. When Don goes above what he thinks proper, 139 pounds, he usually blames me for having insisted on our eating a fattening supper, or drinking too much, or both. This time, my crime was having shared in a meal of baked potatoes filled with caviar and scallions, washed down by rum and Tab.

This diet didn't raise my own weight but it did seemingly give me, though not Don, insomnia — to which I'm very seldom subject. I don't really mind lying awake, especially if Don is asleep beside me; I feel as though he were sleeping for both of us.

*October 20*

Today, Don went to the Art Center on Palos Verdes. He had agreed to discuss his working-methods and give a demonstration of portrait-drawing. The demonstration was to be watched by an audience of art students, mostly middle-aged women. This is the kind of assignment which might well be a subject of one's anxiety dreams. But Don has drawn Dali in a dark public bar and Streisand in her dressing-room during a rehearsal. Such situations of pressure and time-limitation seem to stimulate him.

I have seen Don in front of an audience on many occasions. When asked questions, he answers in a matter-of-fact tone, never resorting to philosophical-aesthetic statements. You feel that he has drawn or painted a sitter simply "because it was there"; this is his way of encountering people. What he requires from the sitter is live motionlessness — "live" being the operative word. He wouldn't take the smallest interest in a corpse, even a quite fresh one. For his purposes, it would be no more good to him than a still life or a landscape.

# From Last Drawings of Christopher Isherwood — by Don Bachardy

*28 August 1985*

Chris is thinner than he was two or three months ago, but his weight seems to be stabilized now. At least he can get into his Esprit jumpsuit, for which his stomach was too big earlier this year. He likes wearing it until it comes time for him to pee, when he is unable to figure out how to undo the line of snaps down the front and unzip the long zipper. He is used to the conventional zipper fly, and his new arrangement defeats him.

I started drawing him in the jumpsuit on Sunday. It is a bit complicated in its details and folds, but I am getting the hang of it. On his birthday, on Monday, I did nine drawings — a record for our sessions together? — some of which are really good.

In the middle of the drawing session, David [Hockney] arrived with a young friend from Chicago. He brought with him two gouaches for Chris, one of them of the deck of our house with the view of the ocean and the canyon beyond, and the other a composition of large letters which read *Happy Birthday Christopher Love David H.* I opened a bottle of champagne, and we all had some.

*18 September*

While Chris was sitting for me on Thursday evening, his eyes on me and the view of the ocean, mountains and canyon behind me, he suddenly said: "There's so much to describe." His eyes filled with tears. He said nothing more.

*16 November*

I drew Chris yesterday afternoon for the first time since before he went into hospital. The first drawings I've done in nearly three weeks! Chris was lying in bed in our bedroom, sleeping most of the time. The light was difficult, the space awkward, his shiftings unpredictable, the angle of his head most unaccommodating. I worked from about two-thirty 'til after six, when Clytie [Alexander] arrived, the last hour and fifteen minutes by artificial light. I thought I had probably done nothing of interest, but this morning, when I looked at them, I was moved. Several of them look like death-drawings. He is so little and vulnerable in them, yet I don't remember thinking that when I did them.

*2 December*

I was working with Chris in the bedroom most of the afternoon and didn't stop until the early evening. The drawings I'd done were spread out on the

floor to dry. After getting my drawing tools put away, I began to collect the drawings, one on top of the other in a pile, examining each to be sure that there were no wet spots that might run or smear. I had assumed Chris was napping, but he must have been watching because, as I was leaving the bedroom with the drawings to take them out to my studio, without lifting his head he said, "I like the ones of him dying."

### *9 December*

I do feel guilty sometimes for insisting on these sessions with Chris, plaguing him, wearying him. Yet it is the only way now that I can really be with him intensely, in a way which challenges me as much as him. Perhaps it's my revenge on him for getting old and sick. If so, so be it. I know that he forgives me. I know that he understands.

### *3 January 1986*

By sheer force of will I have made myself draw Chris on both of the first two days of the year. I don't know if I did anything of merit. I felt dried up and without any inspiration at all. Chris lies there coughing, moaning, and grimacing, occasionally calling for Nanny and mumbling some unintelligible complaint. I have real trouble now just looking at him, torn as I am between sympathy and disgust.

### *4 January*

It is one-forty now. I haven't yet called anyone and am dreading both that and the death drawing which I know I must do. Chris's body spooks me because already it has so little to do with him. Wherever he is, he is not in that ....

I have had my death encounter with Chris. I have had that body all to myself all afternoon. I'm glad Elsie [Isherwood's doctor] didn't notice the eleven drawings I'd placed on the table in the darkened dining room, hoping she would not notice them. I was afraid she would think me ghoulish. I feel sort of ghoulish, but also like an artist, and a pioneer in the further reaches of the land of feeling.

I was deeply shocked by Chris's remains — their utter lack of connection with him, in spite of the nose, the eyebrows, the ears — but forced myself to go on and on, looking into those dead empty eyes where once such light had flashed. When drawing faces, I am skillful enough at instilling a quality of life in them that I had to remind myself not to bring life to the drawings, but fear even so few of them look as alive, almost, as last night's drawings ... But already by last night he was on his way — those unblinking eyes half turned up under the lids.

Since I only draw and paint people, and always work only from life, my working experience is one of identification with my subject. While Chris was dying, I focused on him intensely hour after hour. I was able to identify with him to such an extent that I felt I was sharing his dying, just as I'd shared so many other experiences with him. It began to seem that dying was something

which we were doing together. That shared experience provided me with a greater understanding of what death is and, with it, a diminished fear of my own. Chris's last gift to me was one of the most valuable of the many he gave me in our thirty-three years together. It was characteristic of him to be generous, even in the act of dying.

Harlan Greene  
&  
Olin Jolley

# On Valentine's Day — by Harlan Greene

*This piece was first published in the Valentine's Day Issue of Frontiers in 1993*

The first time I saw him, I thought he was trying to poke fun at me. I had just come to the bar in dowdy clothes from a Charleston dinner party. There he was, younger and better looking than I, wearing political buttons and blue jeans. His eyes had a double light to them, something I had never seen before; it intrigued. He asked me to dance and later I went with him and his visiting friends to christen the apartment he had just rented. He was in medical school and had just come to Charleston. The next week we went running.

Then we went out to eat. Do you remember, Olin? You were so calm and guileless, straightforward and serene, so much so that I felt like a grasping lecherous thing. My heart raced; my tongue tripped me up. But an odd and impossible joy kept welling up in me.

I'm just like an old uncle to him, I told myself; how could someone so unfettered and promising be interested in befuddled Byzantine me?

But — wonder of wonders, you did like me: One night, drunk on wine, your company, and the elegiac music playing, I grew bold and kissed you. And you kissed back.

I remember, too, the first night we spent in my new house, the one I was supposed to grow old alone in; and I said the word for the first time; I said I loved you. It must have been what Joshua's shout was to the walls of Jericho, for in that instant, I lost my shield; my old invulnerability tumbled and newly revealed, I was no longer untouched by love.

So much has happened in those now nearly dozen years that looking back makes me dizzy — it's not just other countries we've seen (thank you for going to Venice and getting in a gondola with me), but strange and marvelous and terrifying terrains and emotional discoveries. I feel alive, vital, and connected thanks to you.

The poem by Yeats, with the line "the sorrows of your changing face" comes back to me. Our dream was to grow old together — I'd sprout hair from my big ears; you'd show thin white shanks between socks and pants. Together we'd

grow dotty and cantankerous and loving.

But that is not to be. Disease is destroying you, loosening you, my mooring, from me. That you feel so low for what you say you have done to "ruin" my life pains me. Do not believe it for a moment. You rescued me in the final

reel, just like in the movies. If breathing life into someone is ruining him, if loving someone is ruining, then it's true, you've ruined me; for I no longer will just settle for anything.



I suppose we are in love the way fish are in water; and now I cannot tell the difference between love and you. We have fashioned a civilization out of ourselves with love, we have our own known heroes and beliefs, triumphs and tragedies. But our civilization is on the brink of toppling.

I don't want it to. I want to see forever that double light in your gray-green eyes. I want to be witness to your strong brow, prominent nose and cheeks; to realize the quickness of your wit, be lifted by your wisdom and feel the warmth of your elegant body. I want to build temples to you, Taj Mahals of the spirit, but all I have are words and they are paltry.

I know you are scared of my backsliding — that alone, widowed, I'll creep back to Charleston and become the pale polite thing I used to be. But what is that law — it's like love: that chemical change of irreversibility? Ice may become water again, but I can never revert to that thing I was before you loved me.

Thank you for changing me, for choosing me, for asking me to dance, for taking me out of myself, and for writing your name on my heart.

I'm yours forever, darling.

Sign me, your adoring, Harlan.

## Olin Replies — by Olin Jolley

I can't tell you, my beloved, how much that article meant to me when it first appeared. It was as if a tree had fallen in the forest; and now, people could hear — could read — of our feelings. I burst with pride of your love for me.

When I could still walk, I carried a copy of it in my black shoulder bag — along with my medicines, my telephone for emergencies. It became part of my identity, like my driver's license and my membership cards. I showed it to others; it was similar to showing off a picture of us, but mostly I carried it for me.

It's still in there, in my bag, and will be found after I'm dead, tucked in a fold, like a holy scroll rolled in a clay pot: my canon, gospel, the good news.

Reading it brings back visions of my first glimpses of you — before that night in the disco: I saw you running by in the bright sunlight and was taken with your face, your muscled legs, your dark grace and balding pate. I wanted to meet you. So when I saw you again, I asked you to dance, and found out you weren't prejudiced or bigoted or shallow like so many in Charleston. You could speak about ideas, and religion and history.

But as we starting seeing each other, I was bedeviled by doubts like those that assailed you. The old rules of courtship hamstrung me. I would not call when I wanted to (we had to take turns) and I had to not seem anxious to catch you or I might frighten you off with my impropriety.

I'm glad we got beyond those things — that we left them far behind just as we left your city. I wanted to show you how that place belittled you — did not give you your due, but made you feel guilty for not fitting it. But Charleston, I knew, was your first love, so I wanted to do it gently. I had to take you out of there, out of your idea of yourself, out of your history, like a self-fulfilling prophecy, so you could stand back and see for yourself — that it was not your failings — but your setting's.

You left for the sake of my career.

Thank you, Harlan, for coming with me.

It was going to be my turn next, you know. After finishing residency, I was going to take care of you. I would bring in the money, find us a house, set you free. I would do for you what you had done for me. You could make writing your career.

But now, as you say, I am being set loose. I feel my fingers being pried opened; I am being pulled by an undertow out to sea. I don't want to go, Harlan. I don't want to leave. But the water wants me. I can't escape its pull; I can't run away, can't even walk (except in my dreams, where I walk, I run, we dance). With this disease, there so much of me that is numb — my legs, my arms, but not my heart. It is as if I am turning to stone. You have to carry me upstairs; I am tethered to my disease by my morphine pump, and to the world

by you.

Thanks to you, I know of a rare love, a love few who speak of it really know. I do. I can see it in your face as you look at me. Love and you have given me years. There is no way I would have survived this disease so long (seven years now, not the two they — the doctors — estimated) without love, without you. Your love has made and sustained me — just as I want my love to go on and sustain, endow, imbue and halo you when I am not here.

For I am going soon, I know it. I will leave against my will. Sometimes I can hear the nearness of things; the brush of dark (angel's?) wings. It hurts. The anguish in my soul, the pain in my body, is so deep that nothingness — no feeling at all — seems a beacon, a balm of peace. But my love for you is the keeping me alive. It's stronger than morphine; it does not deaden, it does not bring oblivion. Such love (like death?) brings release into larger things. How could such a powerful force ever die? Dare I, we, hope for eternity?

It is the pulse throbbing in me; and reminds me of our trip to the volcano in Hawaii one Thanksgiving. We were so close to the volcano's molten lava as it poured into the sea, we inhaled the steam. I remember the glory of colors rising in the night as the heart of the volcano, the lava, its love, glowing red, burning arterially, kissed the sea and rose, like a sigh from spent passion, into the atmosphere.

That is how it may be: When I am gone, don't harden your heart into stone with grief; let it slowly become fertile again, prime for life, loam for new feelings.

I can't promise, like Houdini, that I will return with a message from the other side. So I'll leave mine here, instead, in these words that will outlive me.

So hear me now, like your call from Jane Eyre, hear me now and whenever you come back to these pages to remember and reflect, smile and weep. Nothing will change the physical law of our psyches, our selves.

Whether we are here or not, Olin loves Harlan. For always.

## About the contributors

Don Bachardy is a portrait artist who has had many one-man exhibitions. He still lives in his and Isherwood's Santa Monica home (his place of residence for over 50 years), where he paints portraits for gallery shows and on a commission basis. (Christopher Isherwood)

Patrick Barnes is an actor and songwriter. He has written music for theaters in New York, Ohio, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. With Craig Lucas, he has written *The Conversion* and *Al Fresco*, two short musical pieces. (Craig Lucas)

Tom Bianchi is a photographer and writer who has published 21 books of photographs, poems, and essays. Bianchi, who is HIV positive, has been active in several projects devoted to the fight against AIDS. He is the co-founder of a biotechnology company and manages the funding for the development of new AIDS medication. (Mark Prunty)

Walta Borawski (1947-94) was the author of *Sexually Dangerous Poet* (Good Gay poets, 1984) and *Lingering in a Silk Shirt* (Fag Rag Books, 1994). He died of complications from AIDS in 1994. (Michael Bronski)

Malcolm Boyd (1923-2015) was an American Episcopal priest and author. He was active in the civil rights movement as one of the Freedom Riders in 1961. In 1977 Boyd "came out", revealing that he was homosexual and becoming a spokesman for gay rights. (Mark Thompson)

Michael Bronski is an American academic and writer, best known for his 2011 book *A Queer History of the United States*. (Walta Borawski)

Regie Cabico is a critically acclaimed performance poet who has won top prizes in the 1993, 1994 and 1997 at National Poetry Slams. His poetry appears in over 30 anthologies. (Guillermo Castro)

Michael Carroll is an American writer who published his debut short story collection *Little Reef* in 2014. Originally from Jacksonville, Florida, he has been the partner of writer Edmund White since 1995. Carroll and White were legally married in 2013. (Edmund White)

Guillermo Castro was born in Argentina in 1962. He published his first poems in his native country and has since published poems in English in *Excursus* magazine. (Regie Cabico)

Harlan Greene is an American writer and historian. He has published both

fiction and non-fiction works. In addition to his writing, Greene has worked as an archivist for the College of Charleston. (Olin Jolley)

Christopher Isherwood (1904-86) was one of the most important gay writers of the century. Born in England, he attended Cambridge with W.H. Auden and Stephen Spender and studied with E.M. Forster. His many books include *The Berlin Stories* (which gave birth to *Cabaret*) and *The Single Man*. For over 30 years, he lived with painter Don Bachardy in Santa Monica, California. (Don Bachardy)

Olin Jolley was born in Gavney, South Carolina and is a graduate of Duke University and the Medical University of SC. After nearly dying from AIDS complications in 1989, he retired from his psychiatric residency at UNC-Chapel Hill in 1991. (Harlan Greene)

Arnie Kantrowitz is an American gay activist, college professor emeritus, and writer. He was vice-president of the Gay Activists Alliance in 1971 and a founding member of the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation in 1985. (Lawrence Mass)

Richard Labonté is a Canadian writer and editor, best known as the editor or co-editor of numerous anthologies of LGBT literature. He has won three Lambda Literary Awards for his work as an editor and currently resides in British Columbia with his husband. (Asa Dean Liles)

Asa Dean Liles was raised in Florida, Mississippi, and Tennessee, and lived in Tucson for 14 years before moving to San Francisco, where he eventually found a man, a truck, and a dog. Now he is married to that same man and lives in Canada. (Richard Labonté)

Craig Lucas is an American playwright, screenwriter, theatre director, musical actor, and film director. His works include *Prelude to a Kiss*, *Longtime Companion*, *Reckless*, *Blue Window*, *Missing Persons*, and *God's Heart*. He has received the Obie Award, Sundance Film Festival Audience Award, L.A. Drama Critics Award, Outer Circle Award, and Guggenheim and Rockefeller fellowships. (Patrick Barnes)

Lawrence Mass, a New York City physician, was a cofounder of Gay Men's Health Crisis and wrote the first press reports on the epidemic that later became known as AIDS. Since 1979, he has lived and worked as a physician in New York City. Having written for the *New York Native* since the 1970s, he currently writes a column for *The Huffington Post*. (Arnie Kantrowitz)

Tim Miller is an American performance artist and writer, whose pieces frequently involve gay identity, marriage equality and immigration issues. He was one of the NEA Four, four performance artists whose National

Endowment for the Arts grants were vetoed in 1990 by NEA chair John Frohnmayer. (Douglas Sadownick)

Paul Monette (1945-95) won the National Book Award in 1992 for his memoir, *Becoming a Man: Half a Life Story* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992). He was the author of numerous novels, screenplays, collections of poetry, and the autobiographical *Borrowed Time* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988). His death was AIDS-related. (Winston Wilde)

Mark Prunty was born in Lexington, Kentucky. He is a graphic designer. (Tom Bianchi)

Matthew Rettenmund is the author of *Boy Culture*, *Encyclopedia Madonnica*, *Totally Awesome '80s*, and *Queer Baby Names*. He lives in New York. (José Vélez)

Douglas Sadownick is a gay American writer, activist, professor and psychotherapist. He is the founding director of the nation's first LGBT Specialization in Clinical Psychology, at Antioch University, and he is also the Founder of Colors LGBTQ Youth Counseling Center, founded in 2011. His works include *Sex Between Men: An Intimate History of the Sex Lives of Gay Men Postwar to Present* (HarperCollins, 1996) and a novel, *Sacred Lips of the Bronx* (St. Martins, 1994). (Tim Miller)

Mark Thompson is the author/editor of *Gay Spirit*, *Leatherfolk*, *Gay Soul*, and *The Long Road to Freedom: The Advocate History of the Gay and Lesbian Movement*. (Malcolm Boyd)

José Vélez is a produced playwright in his native Puerto Rico. (Matthew Rettenmund)

Winston Wilde is a sexologist, psychotherapist, and author living in Los Angeles, California. In 2007 fourteen years of research produced the release of Wilde's book *Legacies of Love: A Heritage of Queer Bonding* chronicling famous queer relationships with pictures and texts. (Paul Monette)

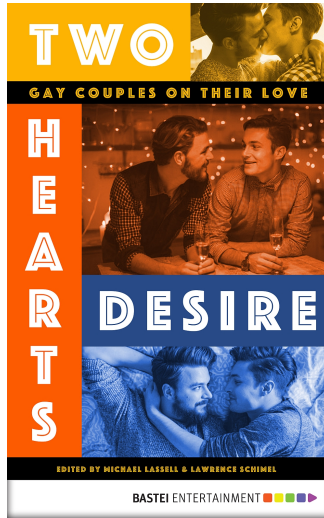
Edmund White is an American novelist, memoirist, and an essayist on literary and social topics. Probably his best-known books are *The Joy of Gay Sex* (1977) (written with Charles Silverstein), his trio of autobiographic novels, *A Boy's Own Story* (1982), *The Beautiful Room Is Empty* (1988) and *The Farewell Symphony* (1997), and his biography of Jean Genet. (Michael Carroll)

## About the editors

Michael Lassell is a writer and editor whose work has been widely published, edited, and translated. He is the author of three books of poetry, *Poems for Lost and Un-lost Boys* (Amelia, 1985), *Decade Dance* (Alyson, 1990), winner of a Lambda Literary Award, and *A Flame for the Touch That Matters* (Painted Leaf, 1998). A former editor of *Interview* and *Metropolitan Home* magazines, he currently resides in New York, where he writes about theater, architecture, and design for numerous publications. He has published three books on interior design with Hachette and is currently at work on his fifth, sixth, and seventh books about Disney theatrical productions on Broadway.

Lawrence Schimel (co-editor) is a writer and editor who has published over 100 books as author or anthologist, including the anthologies *Switch Hitters: Lesbians Write Gay Male Erotica* and *Gay Men Write Lesbian Erotica* (Cleis, 1996); *Food for Life and Other Dish*, a cookbook benefiting organizations that provide food to homebound people with AIDS (Cleis, 1996); and *Tarot Fantastic* (DAW, 1997). He has contributed to numerous newspapers and periodicals, including *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Tampa Tribune*, *Physics Today*, *The Writer*, and *The Lambda Book report*, among others. He lives in Madrid, Spain where he works as a literary translator.

# What did you think?



We'd love your opinion! How did you hear about this book? What was your favorite part?

Please let us know by leaving a comment or a rating where you purchased this eBook. Your feedback helps us deliver you the best products. Happy reading!

**BASTEI** ENTERTAINMENT 